

April 16, 1928

Mr. Joseph Benjamin Oakleaf
Terrace Hill
Moline, Ill.

My dear Mr. Oakleaf:

This is the first moment I have had to
reply to your letter of April 4 - please forgive me.

Yes, I did write something last fall on Mary Todd
Lincoln - a couple of articles which were published in the
February and March numbers of The Ladies' Home Journal. I am
having some of them cut out and pasted up and I will be glad to
send you a copy.

My articles are nothing at all final, but they are a
digest of what I have collected up to date. As long as Robert
Lincoln lived I never cared to say much about Mary Todd Lincoln.

In preparing for the articles I went to Lexington for several
days, trying to satisfy myself about the environment of Mary Todd
as a young girl. One thing I did do down there, which was more im-
portant than anything I unearthed for my article, was to put Katherine
Helm, a niece of Mary Todd Lincoln - or would you call it a half-
niece? - her mother, Mrs. Ben Harder Helm was a half sister - in touch
with Harper Brothers.

She has been writing, with the permission and help, I under-
stand, of Mrs. Robert Lincoln, a life of Mary Todd, using in it her
mother's correspondence and a diary which Mrs. Helm claims to have
written when she was in the White House during the Civil War. I paid
my respects to the Helms, but was very careful not to poach on Miss
Helm's preserves. When I found she was having trouble with her pub-
lisher, I asked her permission to write to Mr. Briggs, the book editor
at Harpers; I at once wrote Mr. Briggs, telling him that so far as
I knew she was the only person that had a chance of really getting in
with the Helms.

It was a matter of personality and I knew he could do it,
if anybody could. I was right, for he has the book, and sold the
serial rights to McCall's. The articles will begun, as perhaps you

already know, in May. I am looking for much fresh material.

Thirty years ago I secured an article for McClure's magazine, and in that she published certain letters. Probably these letters will re-appear in the book - of course they should.

I suppose you have seen Mrs. Morrow's book which she calls an appreciation. I wish you would tell me just how it strikes you. I agree with you that "Forever Free" was a well written piece of work. She has done a great deal of honest study of Lincoln, but is a fiction writer - really doesn't wish to be anything else, and it is a little hard on those of us who are sticklers for facts and who are trying to understand the thoughts and feelings of Abraham Lincoln, to have novelists twisting him to their purposes.

She has a splendid title for her forthcoming book, "With Malice Toward None."

Cordially yours